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“An. When men wear locks, and women with dressings like wings about their eares, and curled hair, the lads with flying wings, slight dishes*, and daily in armes, musitians without reward, and of empty hands, church-yards vilified, tenants in distresse, and when crosses and images fall, when the hills descend and hillocks ascend, then will be a sorry world of sullenness and heaviness, gold hanged and silver buried, fellowship deceitful and treacherous, death without moan, and dearth without want.”

These few passages, although, perhaps, not the most curious, that might have been selected, will sufficiently explain the character of this quaint production, which, in an unenlightened age, and when there prevailed a total ignorance of the real nature of our ancient poetry, may well have excited some degree of superstitious regard. The latter part, or second book, of the work, comprises what are called the “Outlandish Prophecies,” delivered by certain “prophets and prophetesses, to confirm what hath been said by our own,” and has for its title “Europe’s Calamity, England’s Glory.” But this portion of the performance does not come within the scope of the CAMBRO-BRITON.

* * *

WALKS ROUND DOLGELLAU.

——— “Well do I know these mountain wilds :
And every bosom’d vale, and valley stream
Is dear to memory.”

SOUTHEY.

WALK III.

DOLGELLAU TO TOWYN.

THIS is a route not generally pursued by English tourists. Towyn is so dull and secluded a place, as to be very rarely honoured by foreign visitors, albeit the road thither from Dolgellau,—a distance of about seventeen miles,—is upon the whole replete with that romantic variety of landscape, so common in North Wales; and I would certainly recommend the *meritorious traveller* to ride there some morning and return the day following. Old Griffith Owen and his “matchless harp,” are worth this, at least; but on this subject more hereafter. The traveller, who would visit Towyn from Dolgellau, must proceed in a direction extending south-westerly from the latter, leaving the mountain

* *Ysgafn seigiau.*

path to Cader Idris above him, on the left. He will then find himself in a tolerably good road, bounded on the one side by the woods of Bryngwyn and Brynadda, and, on the other, by some fertile meadow-land leading down to the brink of the Wnion. About two miles from Dolgellau, we arrive at Llyn y Penmaen, having previously passed a wide great bog on the right. Hence the Wnion has joined the Mawddach, and both together form a broad and beautiful estuary, having its opposite banks composed of meadow and woods, and heather hills. Hitherto the tract is smooth and easy enough—for a Welsh one; but beyond the Llyn an acclivity commences, leading to a district, which may be justly termed the Western Highlands of Merionethshire. Having ascended Penmaen Hill, we find ourselves in a rude and rugged region, with few traces of cheerfulness, and not many of cultivation; and where that inexpressible emotion, caused by the awful solitude of the hills, is experienced in its fullest extent. Here are no grassy glades swelling out in richness of verdure,—no waving corn-fields, or “dew-bespangled meads,” and no mountain rivulet to lull the ear with the murmuring melody of its waters. Dreary, indeed, is the scene, and its deep stillness is only interrupted by the clatter of the horse’s hoofs, as the traveller rides onwards on his way, or by the sharp, shrill, bleating of the “fair-fleeced wether,” rising in alarm at the approach of the intruder on its solitude.

And scarce our eyes encounter living thing,
Save, now and then, a goat loose wandering;
Or a few cattle, looking up aslant,
With sleepy eyes, and meek mouths ruminant.

But this cheerless landscape is not more than a mile in extent. The valley, through which the road passes, gradually contracts, till it terminates in a spot “so beautiful, so green, so full of goodly prospect,” that he must be a stoical dog indeed, who does not enjoy the glorious scene around him, presenting, as it does, so strong and pleasing a contrast to the sterility, which precedes it. This spot is at an old and weather-beaten mill, worked by the water from a river, which, falling into a small but troubled stream, through a deep wood above the road on the left, passes under a bridge of one arch, and pursues its course through the midst of a lovely glen to the mighty Mawddach, whose glistening surface is just descried between an opening of the hills on the right. About two hundred yards above the bridge the river swells out into a broad and bright pool, the pebbly bottom of

which is distinctly visible through the clear transparency of the water. Here, during my boyhood, have I often spent, with my young playmates, the afternoon of the smiling summer's day, sedulously bent upon the destruction of the piscatory tribe, and regardless of every thing save bites and nibbles. On a green bank by the river's brink, there grew, and indeed, still grows, a large oak, affording a comfortable canopy, and shading off, with its spreading branches, the parching beams of the sun. Under the umbrageous covert of this tree would we tarry, hour after hour, at one moment provokingly tantalised with the hope of hooking a "bouncer," and, at another, bereft almost of all patience by the unaccommodating apathy of our intended prey. But many a long year hath passed by since those days of idle wandering; yet I have not forgotten this scene of my boyish recreation,—and ought I to forget it*?—The most grand and impressive object in the scene from the bridge, is part of the undulating summit of Cader Idris. I have seen it in one mass of deep blue mountain, undimmed by speck or shadow,—and I have also seen it crowned with a wreath of snow-white mist, and over-looking in its might and majesty, the thousand "subject hills" which rise beneath it.

Towering from continent to sea,
Where is the mountain like to thee?
The eagle's darling, and the tempest's pride—
Thou ! on whose ever-varying side
The shadows and the sun-beams glide,
In still or stormy weather !

Beyond the mill the country assumes a more smiling and cheerful aspect. The flourishing plantations of Garthyngghared† enliven the landscape, and evince, in the worthy proprietor of that estate,

* Being in this part of Merionethshire last summer, I paid a visit to the spot I have been speaking of for the first time since I left Wales to reside in England. I found the branches of the old oak still spreading forth their foliage as greenly and luxuriantly as they were wont to do;—the pool as purely transparent as ever, and the wheel of the mill performing its evolutions with as much clack and clamour as it formerly did.

The landscape hath not lost its look,
Still rushes on the sparkling river,
Nor hath the gloominess forsook
Those granite crags that frown for ever.
Still hangs around the shadowy wood,
Whose sounds but murmur solitude.

† Qu. *Garth Anarwd* !—ED.

a commendable eagerness to clothe the sides of his rugged hills with something more valuable than gorse or heather. The improvement, which has been effected within these few years, under the encouraging auspices of Mr. Owen, must carry with it its reward ; to say nothing of the gratification, which the "squire" must experience as he views the declivities of his hills, once bleak and desolate, now well covered with oak, birch, and fir. But it is not merely as an agriculturalist, that the respected owner of Garthyngghared deserves well of his countrymen. There are other qualities more immediately endearing and conspicuous. Open hearted hospitality,—a powerful love of domestic comfort,—with a true taste for those virtues, which a glad and happy home must always generate. Mr. Owen is also a magistrate, and discharges the duties of his office with zeal and benevolence. Last year he was high sheriff of the county, and I need not say how creditably to himself, and how pleasantly to his numerous friends, he fulfilled the functions of his high and important calling. Those, who have not the pleasure of Mr. Owen's acquaintance, will not, perhaps, withhold their forgiveness of this digression,—those who have, and they are many, will readily accord with an old friend, in the brief and imperfect eulogy he has indited. But, to return, having conducted the reader to Garthyngghared, I shall avail myself of the journal of a young friend of mine, who spent a short time in Merionethshire last summer, to describe the remainder of the route to Towyn. He had been sojourning at Garthyngghared, from whence he ascended Cader Idris with an English gentleman, and part of Mr. Owen's family* ; and it is from this period, that his narrative commences.

"A day or two after our jaunt to Cader, we all went to Towyn, a town near the sea, on the confines of the county, and about twelve miles from Garthyngghared. The ladies were to be conveyed thither in the carriage, while Mr. Edward Owen, Mr. Harper (a gentleman from London,) and I were to walk as far as Peniarth, an estate belonging to a branch of the Wynn family, nine miles on the road, where we might procure horses. Having seen the ladies on their way, we took the nearest road over the

* If I can prevail upon my friend, and procure Mr. Editor's concurrence, I will, at some future period, forward a copy of the account of the Cader excursion. I have been favoured with a perusal, and think that it would not discredit the pages of the CAMBRO-BRITON.

hills; and, Mr. Harper and myself, since our stay at Garthyng-hared, having become pretty well enured to the roughness of the Welsh bye-roads, trudged on through bog and briar, over hill and dale, with admirable perseverance; now and then, however, stopping, ostensibly to admire the prospect,—in fact, to rest ourselves. About half way between Garthyng-hared and Peniarth, we passed the ruins of the old summer residence of Ednowen ab Bradwen*, one of the fifteen tribes of North Wales†. The ruins of this castle, consisting merely of a few large stones, placed at irregular distances from each other, mark the form as well as the singularity of the habitations of the ancient Reguli of Wales; agreeing exactly with the description given by Whitaker, in his elaborate History of Manchester. ‘They were commonly placed,’ he says, ‘in the hollow of a valley, and either upon the margin of one stream or the confluence of two, for the conveniency of water, and for security from the winds. The followers lived immediately about the person of their chief, or in little bodies along the meanderings of the valley, to be within reach of the usual signals of their lord; the striking of the shield, or the blowing of the horn.’ The ichnography of Llys Bradwen (for so was this castle called,) presented as nearly as possible a figure, of which one part was a circle, and the remainder an oblong, the eastward circular apartment being the audience hall and court of judicature, and the oblong building containing the chief’s own apartments. Round the ruins of the castle, there are said to have formerly been traces of several other buildings of various

* Ednowen ab Bradwen, usually called Lord of Merioneth, lived in the eleventh century. He bore, for his arms, *Gules* three snakes rowed in a triangular knot argent. By the way, the venerable Sir Watkin Lewis, knight and alderman, is a descendant of Ednowen, as are the heads of many other very respectable families in North Wales. [Ednywain ab Bradwen, commonly styled Ednuvain Bendew, lived, it is said, during the eleventh century, in the time of Gruffydd ab Cynan, Prince of Gwynedd. That he was Lord of Merioneth may be doubted, as this was a title generally appropriated to the Sovereigns of North Wales; however, he had considerable possessions in this county. The ruins of Ednywain’s house, called *Llys Bradwen* (the Palace of Bradwen,) above noticed, are in the township of Cregenan in the hundred of Tal-y-bont.—ED.]

† The Fifteen Tribes or Peers of North Wales were certain chieftains, who held their lands by Baron Service, being bound to particular ministerial attendances on their princes, in addition to those common to them as subjects by *homagē* and fealty.

forms and dimensions. The remains of the principal building seem to have been more perfect in Pennant's time, for he describes them as having 'walls formed with large stones, uncemented with mortar.' I was informed that there were several Druidical circles in the neighbourhood; but probably the remains of the building alluded to above have been mistaken for such.—I saw no indications of either myself. A short distance from Llys Bradwen we gained the summit of a hill, from which we enjoyed a most delightful prospect. A little to the west was the ocean, the morning sun-beams spreading a brilliant light on its broad and glistening surface; as far as the eye could reach towards the north were to be seen Snowdon, and the other lofty mountains of Caernarvonshire. To the east we obtained an extensive and magnificent view, comprehending most of the Merionethshire hills, and we counted, at least, seven distinct ridges of mountains in this direction, their summits tipped with the golden radiance of the morning sun. To the south the dark rocks of Cader rose 'towering to heaven,' while, immediately below us on the left, and intersected by the river Dysynwy, extended the vale of Towyn, with the town, from which it derives its name, nearly in the centre, and the little straggling hamlet of Llanegryn in the distance. The prospect was really so beautiful, that we tarried awhile, actually for the sole purpose of viewing it,—

And admiration, feeding at the eye,
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.

We were, however, rather anxious to reach Peniarth, with the loss of as little time as possible, and, resuming our walk, we passed a picturesque and lofty rock* on our left, and soon arrived there, being shortly after joined by the ladies and the rest of our party. The family, to whom Peniarth belongs, were from home, and the house was under repair; but we gained access to the library, where we made a very hearty dinner on the contents of a basket, which some of the 'woman kind'—I beg their par-

* This rock is called Craig y Deryn, [*Craig Aderyn*,] or the Bird's Rock, from the numerous birds which nightly roost among its crevices. The noise they make just about night-fall is most hideously dissonant; and, as the scenery around is extremely wild and romantic, the ideas, engendered by such a clamour in the gloom of evening, and in so dismal and desolate a spot, are not the most soothing or agreeable. We saw, towards twilight, a large aquatic fowl from the neighbouring marsh, majestically "wending its way" to the place of its rest.

don—some of our fair companions, I mean, had luckily stowed in the carriage. A decent and rather antique matron, and a sort of house-steward, (a cool, shrewd, calculating Scotchman,) who were left in charge of the premises, supplied us with abundance of capital *cwru*, and some of the best porter I ever tasted, and we found ourselves very comfortably situated after our long and toilsome walk. We remained at Peniarth more than two hours, and, having sufficiently refreshed ourselves,

Postquam exempla fumes, et amor compressus edendi.

we recommenced our journey, the ladies by the turnpike road,—Mr. Edward Owen, Mr. Harper, and I through the marshes. Before our arrival at Towyn, we again joined our party, and, twelve in number, entered the town, and drew up to the door of the Raven Inn, amidst the wondering gaze of every inhabitant of the place, and, doubtless, to the most cordial satisfaction of 'mine host.'

"Having ordered supper, we left the ladies at the inn, and set off for the well, (a very pool of Bethesda, by the way, in the estimation of the natives,) celebrated for the miraculous cures, which it performs on the persons who bathe in it*. Here the athritic, the rheumatic, and the phthisicky, *cum multis aliis*, find a sure remedy for their diseases; and the number of people, who resort to it, all of the lower class, is astonishing. While we were there, and it was then late in the evening, we saw three patients undergoing ablution, and in a field, on one side, were several more preparing to perform the same ceremony. On our return to the inn we found the ladies listening to the music of their national instrument, the harp, which was played by the landlord, Griffith Owen, deservedly esteemed one of the best performers in North Wales. Passionately fond of music, and of the airs of my native country in particular, I listened with attention and pleasure to the old man's performances, and, as he swept the strings of his instrument to the bold and inspiring air of The March of the Men of Harlech, or to the milder and more soothing strains of Pen Rhaw and Codiad yr Hedydd, every feeling, save that of the purest delight, was chased away by the pleasing and impressive melody. His performance, however, was not confined to Welsh

* This is one reason, perhaps, that no knight of the pestle has yet ventured to take up his abode at Towyn. If I mistake not, the inhabitants are equally fortunate with respect to those "learned in the law." Happy, happy, Towyn! to be unencumbered with either lawyer or doctor.

pieces*. He played several of the favourite airs of the old masters, and some with accompaniments of his own. He used formerly to compose a good deal; but the indolence, natural to old age, (for he has numbered more than seventy years,) has deprived him, he told me, of "all relish for composing." In the morning his son played to us, and, although his execution is far inferior to that of his father, whose very touch is harmony, it is by no means despicable. He is unhappily subject to fits of mental alienation, and his performance denotes the wild and hurried state of his intellect. The next morning I accompanied two of our fair *compagnons de voyage* to view the town, which, to speak candidly, is hardly worthy of an appellation so lofty. As for streets, it has none; and what the inhabitants would willingly term such are merely lanes, adorned with wide and dirty ditches, meandering placidly along their centre. It contains about half a dozen good houses, and a church with no great pretensions to elegance†. After we had inspected the town, we strolled towards the beach, about half a mile distant, which affords a pleasant and firm walk. On our return we passed by a cottage, the door of which stood open, and some fine healthy looking children were gambolling on the threshold. We were tempted to peep in, and our curiosity was rewarded with a view of the humble interior of a Welsh cottage, rendered as neat as manual labour could make it. The happy little rogues, who were playing by the door, suspended their sports, and regarded us with amazement, mingled, perhaps, with something like fear. A decent, good looking, woman now addressed us from within, and very cordially invited us, in good English, to enter and "sit down a bit." We declined her invitation, and a small *douceur*, as an atonement for our intrusion, made the little folk very happy, while their parent's fond eye glistened with delight and gratitude, and we left the cottage amidst the repeated thanks of this civil and contented cottager."

MERVINIUS.

* Some account of the popular tunes above mentioned may be found in the first volume of this work, at pages 95, 332, and 173.—ED.

† This church is dedicated to St. Cadvan, a native of Armorica, who came over to this country, with other religious persons, in the beginning of the sixth century. He is supposed to have been buried on this spot. Some years ago there were in the church-yard two rude pillars, one of which, of the form of a wedge, about seven feet high, and having a cross and inscription upon it, went by the name of St. Cadvan's Stone, and may have been a part of his tomb. This ancient relic now decorates a grotto, belonging to a neighbouring gentleman, who took the liberty of removing it.—ED.